

WATERBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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*Health. **Moves.** **Minds.***

February 22, 2017

Testimony for Public Hearing - Appropriations Committee

***H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019,
AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

*February 23 2017 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Regional Action Council Funding*

IN SUPPORT OF REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

My name is Joseph Gorman. I am the Supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the Waterbury Public Schools and I represent the Mayor's Task Force Against Substance Abuse in the City of Waterbury as its current Chairman. I urge you to **OPPOSE** currently proposed budget reductions to regional action councils (RACs), and encourage full restoration of current RAC funding moving forward.

I concede that prevention programs are far more challenging to supply "hard" data for than treatment or response programs and require a certain element of faith in the power of preventive actions. As such, I sympathize with your dilemma of having to decide what cuts must occur and where with so many trying to convince you otherwise. Please know that the state's 13 Regional Action Councils (RACs) work to provide every community in the state with education, training, and advocacy for substance abuse prevention and related community concerns such as prescription drug abuse, opioid addiction, behavioral health, violence, gambling, drunk / distracted driving, and suicide, et. al.

Surely this committee can appreciate how cost-effectively the current system of regional action councils impacts volunteer "boots on the ground" in our communities that rely so heavily upon them to deliver meaningful prevention services. In Waterbury alone, our regional action council, the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council (CNVRAC), has served as an integral and irreplaceable partner in the development of the following initiatives:

- Greater Waterbury Regional Opioid Task Force – inclusive of all community stakeholders, including police, firefighters, ambulance services, hospitals, mental health as well as drug assisted treatment providers, pharmaceutical vendors, M.D.s, and school personnel, et. al.
- Promotion & coordination of district-wide youth-led analyses of local-level risk and protective factors affecting adolescent substance use, education, risk of suicide, bullying, safety, and other areas affecting health and wellness of young people
- Coordination and development of local-level Drug Endangered Child (DEC) Alliances between Waterbury Police Department, Department of Children & Families, and the statewide DEC office
- Promotion & Coordination of DEC training for Waterbury Law Enforcement, School Administration and Pupil Personnel Services Staff, area social service agencies, probation, parole, DCF Caseworkers, and other related professionals
- Coordination of a permanent Medication Drop Box installation at Waterbury Police Department and ongoing promotion of this cost-effective opioid deterrence measure
- Professional Development for teachers and Bridge To Success service agency staff provided on 40 Developmental Assets for Youth; Opioid Abuse Prevention Forum; Financial Wellness for Seniors and Problem Gambling Prevention Across the Lifespan; Local Prevention Council “101”; Local Prevention Council Capacity Building; Local Prevention Council TA: Prevention Strategies & Effective Service Delivery and Mental Health First Aid training, among others.
- Development and dissemination of Opioid Overdose Wallet Cards to prevent opioid overdose deaths
- Coordination & Delivery of Innovative Media Campaigns on Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
- Promotion & coordination of comprehensive youth risk behavior and resiliency surveys conducted with all students in grades 6-12 throughout Waterbury Public Schools
- Membership and Advisement to the Waterbury School Health and Wellness Advisory Council, the Waterbury Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens District Council, the Waterbury Public Schools Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum Development Committee
- Contributing Partner to the Waterbury Public Schools PK-12 Health and Wellness Curriculum Revision

- Serve as a consistent, ongoing professional development resource provider and presenter on substance abuse prevention instructional strategies, data trends and research-based promising practices for 60 Health and Physical Education Teachers and 19,000+ students.
- Organizational support to the Waterbury Youth Council and logistical support to the Waterbury “Teens Who Care” Foundation

It should also be acknowledged that the activities of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council were directly attributable to two recent award selections of Waterbury by the ING Foundation as one of America’s Top 100 Communities for Youth.

In closing, I **OPPOSE** budget reductions to RACs under consideration. As a thirteen (13) year volunteer Chairman of the Mayor’s Task Force Against Substance Abuse, I rely heavily upon my RAC for quality actionable research, resources and coordination of services I simply cannot generate independently, given the scope of my other professional responsibilities. If you elect to surrender the elimination of regional action councils, countless important, proactive and cost-effective local prevention services will be lost state-wide and most certainly in Waterbury. Waterbury needs to preserve what fragile prevention infrastructure we have left, and we need, not want, the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council to help do that. I need the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council to help do that.

As the House Appropriations Committee, you have the power to see value in programs that accomplish much with little overhead. The Regional Action Councils accomplish just that. As such, I look to you to be visionary, acknowledge our communities’ prevention service needs, and act to preserve the programs that supply them so cost effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Joseph R. Gorman

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